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Marxism in Foreign Policy

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Summary and Keywords

The problematic implications of the long absence of a dedicated encounter between Marxism and FPA (foreign policy analysis) are discussed. This absence has been marked by a series of different starting points and theoretical preferences between both intellectual projects. A paradigmatic turn for the incorporation of FPA and international politics into a revised Marxist research program is needed. Whereas FPA originated within a United States-centric Cold War context, growing out of the subfield of “comparative foreign policy,” which initially pursued a positivistic methodology, Marxism’s European theoretical legacy afforded neither international relations nor foreign policy analysis any systematic place since its inception in the 19th century. Recurring rapprochements were qualified successes due to Marxism’s tendency to relapse into structuralist versions of grand theorizing. While these could speak to general theories of international relations in the field of IR (international relations) from the late 20th century onward, FPA fell again and again through the cracks of this grand analytical register. Marxist FPA has only very recently been recognized as a serious research program, notably within the two traditions of neo-Gramscian international political economy (IPE) and Marxist historical sociology. With this move, Marxism has started to identify a problematique and produced a nascent literature that should bear fruit in the future.

Keywords: Marxism, foreign policy analysis, capitalism, imperialism, geopolitics, international relations, political Marxism, state theory, class analysis, historical sociology

Marxism and FPA: A Lacuna

The term *foreign policy analysis* (FPA) denotes a subfield of IR (international relations) theory, which itself grew out of the subfield of “comparative foreign policy” (CFP) within IR, overlapping with, but not reducible, to the rest of the field. The constitution of CFP as an antecedent to FPA is important for understanding why Marxism never developed an FPA approach. CFP was born into the Anglo-American international relations world that took shape in the early Cold War period and was imbued with the intellectual flavorings of its time. Of particular importance here were the dominance of a “realist” power politics approach, and the “positivistic” methods in American social science at the time (Smith, 2000).

The constitution of IR theory as “realism” during this period created the space for CFP (and later FPA), because realism’s relationship to the practice of foreign policy formation was ambivalent. In other words, the tension between realism’s normative and descriptive dimensions meant that it was always unclear whether realists should be in the business of offering advice to states-people in formulating policy (Waeber, 2011, p. 112). This meant that conceptual space existed for a partially autonomous field of inquiry into foreign policy formation to develop. However, methodologically speaking, this space co-existed with the positivistic trends in American social science. Ironically, although the famous founders of Anglo-American IR theory (such as Morgenthau, Carr, and Niebuhr) reacted strongly against behaviorism and positivism (Knutsen, 1997, pp. 244–246), leading to the “classical realist” position in IR, those interested in foreign policy formation had no such qualms about adopting the quantitative and “scientific” methods of the time. In an “age of system” (Heyck, 2015), the field of CFP promised a systematic and rigorous theoretical model of foreign policy making, moving away from “mere description” and the narrative storytelling of diplomatic historians.

Particularly influential was the self-image of the early practitioners of CFP who wanted the field to develop in a theoretically uniform way, and thus constitute it as a “normal science” in the sense introduced by Thomas Kuhn. This misunderstanding of Kuhn’s ideas (Read, 2001) was reflected in the early CFP work, as scholars assembled “data” about foreign policy in the form of “event counts” and proceeded to explain its sources through “levels of analysis” methods. The dominant explanatory concepts were ideal-typical nations, ideal-typical societal types, behavioral modes, and game-theoretic decision-making models. Discrete “levels” were treated as autonomous causal variables—individual, role, government type, society type, global system, and so on. Rosenau’s (1966) influential early statement encapsulated the zeitgeist of CFP—a “pre-theoretical framework” would ensure that the work was systematic, scientific, and quantitative (cf. Raymond, 1975).

Given the misconceived nature of the call for a “Kuhnian paradigm” to operate within, it was only natural that as time wore on the “normal scientific” status of CFP was called into question. At the boundaries of the core of CFP, other orthodox IR scholars had made significant contributions to foreign policy analysis without adopting the methods of CFP. Through the 1970s, a range of phenomena converged to destabilize CFP as a research program: the general decline of positivistic and behavioralist methods; the decline of “modernization theory,” which had been an important aspect of comparative political studies in the United States; the rise of “interdependence” approaches, coupled with the success of “world-systems theory” on the American Left; and the impact of the Vietnam War and the input of “area studies” specialists into IR. These processes destroyed the illusion of methodological unity that underpinned CFP, and also the sharp distinction between IR theory and comparative political theory. From the 1980s onward the field morphed into modern FPA, characterized by methodological pluralism, a mixture of quantitative and qualitative approaches, and hostility toward attempts to methodologically foreclose the field.

While CFP had been heavily United States-centric, FPA internationalized its empirical focus. Engagement with “grand structural” IR theories became the norm, rather than exception, and the insights of earlier realist writings on, for instance, alliance behavior, security dilemmas, deterrence, and bargaining behavior became central to the discipline. Interdependence theorists’ ideas about hegemonic global orders, world-systems theorists’ concerns with imperialism and imperial states, and scholarship on international organizations and their role in mediating interstate relations all filtered into FPA. By the mid-1990s, a standard FPA textbook was able to claim that, “The eschewing of the need to have a field organized around a central paradigmatic and methodological core has freed foreign policy analysts to draw upon multiple literatures that speak to the central preoccupation: foreign policy theory and behavior” (Neack, Hey, & Haney, 1995, p. 9).

Given this rather eclectic approach, it might be thought that introducing a Marxian influence into FPA analysis would have happened sooner rather than later. However, this has not been the case. The reason for this must surely lie in the positivistic Anglo-American analytic heritage of FPA, which is fundamentally at odds with that of the Marxian tradition, drawn from the continental philosophical tradition (Cornu, 1957). This raises a paradox, in that even if contemporary FPA has largely moved away from its positivistic moorings, what might be called its “style of analysis” jars somewhat with Marxism, while at the same time the eclecticism of FPA leaves the door open for an encounter with Marxist thought. Hence on the one hand there is room for a perhaps fruitful dialogue, while at the same time numerous methodological challenges are posed.

Although FPA is a broad field, and perhaps defies simplistic description, recent scholarship shows enough continuity to be able to identify core approaches within the field. From its inception, FPA has tended to be somewhat critical of the assumption in much orthodox IR that states are the “building blocks” of international politics. As Hudson notes, FPA’s guiding assumption is that the “grounding” of IR should be human beings, acting as individuals or in groups, making decisions, much the same as the rest of

the social sciences (Hudson, 2005). Typically, most FPA tends to try to explain specific foreign policy outcomes in the form of key events, rather than repeating structural patterns, as perhaps much of the rest of IR theory does. Given that these events are tied to human decision-makers, much of the field has a bias toward understanding how and why a specific decision was taken. However, in keeping with the eclecticism of the field, the range of possible influences to be accounted for when undertaking the task of deciding why a specific decision was taken is very broad. If a simple notion of “decision” is taken, then even mundane factors such as the comfort of the decision-makers in any given situation might be deemed important for why a specific outcome came about.

Despite this potential for seemingly meaningless minutiae to be the center of the analysis, FPA has tended to cluster around quite specific poles of enquiry. Along an axis running from micro to macro, these include: individual decision-makers (the psychology of leaders); group decision-makers (bureaucratic political processes); cultural factors (national identities, etc.); domestic political factors (legislative politics); and the effects of the structure of the international system. This last one, is, of course, the terrain of orthodox IR theory, and as such involves a switch from “decision-making” to the “context of decision-making.” However, the latter is still addressed in a substantially different way than in mainstream IR (Bruening, 2007; Hudson, 2014; Alden & Aran, 2017).

Classical Marxism, IR, and Foreign Policy

The influence of Marxist thought on the field of international relations (IR) has been through numerous phases, any appreciation of which must take account of the fundamental contradictions between the original “critique of political economy” begun by Marx and Engels, and the “science of international politics” that developed through the 20th century. These contradictions have been a function as much of inherently different “starting points” between Marxism and IR, as of contradictions and lacunae within both Marxist thought and IR theory. Thus, the confrontation between the two traditions has been a two-way street, with Marxist insights posing challenges to orthodox IR theory, and IR posing challenges to Marxian-inspired social science. As far as the latter goes, the heart of the problem has been that Marx and Engels did not systematically address the question of “international relations,” focusing instead on developing a sophisticated analysis of transitions *internal* to various societal formations (Berki, 1971; Soell, 1972; Kandal, 1989; Harvey, 2001; Teschke, 2008).

This does not mean that Marx and Engels never wrote about phenomena that can be seen to fall under the purview of “international relations”—quite the opposite in fact—but their scattered and fragmentary writings on the issue do not amount to anything like a coherent theoretical reflection, and arguably contain within them the seeds of basic contradictions within Marxist thought. Marx and Engels’s initial position on international relations was influenced by a form of liberal cosmopolitanism, which forecast the universalizing dynamic of capitalism and accepted its “pacifying” effects—a function of interdependence brought about by increased commerce among nations. This liberal moment was built into the emancipatory anticipation of Marx’s theory of world history, because it was the progressive overwhelming of pre-capitalist societies by the universalizing capitalist dynamic that would eventually lay the foundations for a “worldwide proletariat” to develop, and thus a synchronized global proletarian revolution. In Soell’s words, there was a dynamic of “simultaneous development on a world scale” (1972, p. 112).

These initial Marxist formulations foundered on the rocks of European historical development during the mid-19th century. In particular, the failed revolutions of 1848 brought the relations between capitalist universalization, interstate war, and social revolution sharply into focus. The belated recognition of this nexus led to an emphasis on “unevenness” as a mediating fly-in-the-ointment of capitalist universalism, but this begged a fundamental question: if spatial fragmentation had to be taken as given, the manifestation of which was “unevenness,” then why should there be any expectation that this fragmentation would inexorably be overcome by “universal capitalist world history”? Later writings by Marx and Engels, especially when in journalistic mode, offered often sophisticated and nuanced insights into 19th-century geopolitics. However, this arguably exacerbated the disjuncture between the initial theoretical foundations and ad hoc historical interventions, no matter how insightful the latter were. The culmination of

Marx's intellectual journey in the three volumes of *Das Kapital* hardly rectified this tension, as they are couched in a more fully "political economic" mode that barely registers geopolitics at all, with the promised theory of the state and international relations mentioned in the 1857 *Introduction* never materializing.

The dimension of IR was left to Marx and Engels's immediate intellectual inheritors, namely the primarily Russian and Germanic second generation of Marxists of the late 19th and early 20th century. These thinkers grew up during a period of economic crisis (1873–1898) and imperial conquest (the "Scramble for Africa"), which appeared to terminate in the arms race and violent upheaval of World War I (WWI). Thus they sought to link more explicitly changing geopolitical dynamics and capitalist crisis, in the form of the theory of capitalist imperialism. Despite differences in emphasis, the core of this theory, as expressed in the writings of Bukharin, Hilferding, and Lenin,¹ involved the putative empirical observation that capitalism had shifted from an era of free competition to one of cartelization and concentration of capital—the era of "monopoly capitalism." The notion developed to capture this change was "finance capital," as industrial and banking capital fused, thus uniting previously fractured interests who colluded in instrumentalizing state power in order to promote their monopolistic interests (Howard & King, 1989, pp. 90–105).

The fusion of capital-interests into one, and the fusion of state and capital, produced numerous inter-connected dynamics. Domestically, protectionist policies and price setting behaviors were encouraged, while internationally, the imperatives to control raw materials and capture export markets resulted in empire-building and a generalized dynamic of imperial/colonial conquest. The "super-profits" reaped from the colonies allowed the imperial metropole to integrate its working classes into the nation-state with promises of higher wages and social welfare, thus solidifying national identity. As the double fusion progressed, a purer form of capitalist international relations emerged, namely "inter-imperial rivalry," in which private economic competition by firms morphed via monopoly capitalism into politico-military competition among states. The collapse of world order in 1914 was an inevitable outcome of this period (Howard & King, 1989, pp. 243–268).

This classical Marxist theory of capitalist imperialism has been criticized on both empirical and theoretical grounds. Empirically, the evidence for the links between a "search for profit" on the part of monopoly capitalists and the various imperial ventures of the latter half of the 19th century is far from persuasive (Brewer, 1990, pp. 79–126; Kiely, 2010, pp. 54–90). Even were the theory devoid of empirical weaknesses, it suffers from the flaw of mistaking a particular historical juncture of international capitalist development for a reified theoretical necessity, inscribed inexorably into the world-historical unfolding of capitalism through time. At the heart of this problem is a lack of reflection on the historical constitution of state power and agency, and interstate competition. Foreign relations are conceived in a reductionist and mechanistic fashion, both domestically and internationally, as political agency is collapsed into economic necessity. Differences between the imperial "core" states, as well as the capacity to resist

on the part of “peripheral” societies, are obliterated in favor of a singular capital-logic. Foreign policy formation as an object of analysis drops out in favor of a macro-structural account, which assumes a congruity between the interests of state and capital. Whatever foreign policy formation there is, is purely a derivation from the given imperatives of capital accumulation under conditions of the monopoly stage of capitalism.

The historical trajectory of the 20th century did much to challenge and stretch these initial conceptualizations, with the result that the inheritors of Marx’s ideas were pushed to innovate. Breaking with structural-functionalist premises, Eckart Kehr wrote during the Weimar Republic years a series of sophisticated analyses, based on a Weberianized Marxism, of Imperial Germany’s decision to enter WWI (Kehr, 1977). It sought to replace the prevailing Borussia historiography’s methodological insistence on the “primacy of foreign policy,” which restricted the analysis of foreign and military policy through the methods of traditional diplomatic history (source-criticism based on archival work, which relied exclusively on diplomatic documents and policy papers) as more or less skillful responses to the demands of interstate competition, with an emphasis on the “primacy of domestic politics.” His revisionism laid the foundations for the influential Bielefeld School and its call for “social history” in the post-WWII federal republic.

Kehr grounded his analysis in the interplay between military strategy in the age of “unorganized capitalism” (rather than “monopoly capitalism”), domestic German class interests, struggles over the expansion and sociological composition of the army, sectoral interests—the lobbying of heavy industry and the armaments industry—and inter-departmental rivalries (hence the Weberian inflection). It was the contested resolution of these conflicts, rather than either organic tendencies of capitalist expansion or the dynamics of power politics and alliance-formation within the interstate system, that explained the war declaration. Kehr suggested that German military strategy after the turn of the century—the choice for a short, preemptive, and decisive war, codified in the two-front Schlieffen Plan—was conditioned by the vulnerability of unorganized capitalism that could not sustain a protracted and essentially defensive war—a war of attrition. *Junker* agrarian interests had pushed for high tariffs, so that food provisioning for a long war could not be guaranteed. A “refeudalized bourgeoisie” came to accept its politically subordinate position against the monarchy and the aristocracy in exchange for the exclusion of the Socialists from the political process to protect capitalist property rights (*Sammlungspolitik*). The bourgeoisie was partly integrated into the old regime state through filling positions in the officer corps. Yet, the expansion of the army came to a halt by 1911 due to a conflict between the Ministry of War and the General Staff over the issue of maintaining the social homogeneity and reliability of the army (against the threat of its proletarianization) against the operational demands for further increases in the size of the army. The War Ministry carried the day. By 1911, Kehr suggested, military preparations and successive rounds of re-armament became stabilized due to domestic considerations despite a highly precarious geopolitical context. This relative lull in the build-up of the army was, however, counteracted by the rapid expansion of the navy, in which considerations regarding the social composition of personnel were less relevant. Admiral Tirpitz and powerful sections within the German Imperial Naval Office, which

had close connections with German heavy industry, drove the ambitious fleet program. The fleet was the dowry in the “marriage of iron and rye” (big business and junkers), doubling also as a rallying point for national popular enthusiasm for a German *Weltpolitik*. Kehr identified the final resolution of these domestic conflicts among competing state agencies, socioeconomic interests, and the requirements of military strategy in the tensions between the Ministry of War, which favored a more defensive status quo due to its answerability to the Reichstag and the social implications of the armaments race, and the General Staff. The latter favored a more mechanical and purely operational reading of the strategic situation, embodied in Colonel Ludendorff’s pro-armament agitations, which finally eclipsed the caution of the War Ministry. Ultimately, the “refeudalized” and “militarized” German bourgeoisie waved the new armaments bills through parliament. The “national interest” was never a function of international power struggles but shaped by contending domestic private and public forces.

Scholarly assessments of the Kehr thesis have varied, but there is little disagreement that Kehr’s interventions opened up a new research agenda on the domestic causes of foreign policy formation, which decisively broke with the Rankean and Treitschkean tropes of the primacy of foreign policy in German and Western historiography (Wehler, 1965). Class conflicts, party politics, sectoral rivalries, status groups, bureaucratic politics, and inter-agency competition all entered into the final analysis. While Kehr never extrapolated from his historical studies a more formalized model of foreign policy analysis, he arguably over-emphasized the domestic side at the expense of the external context that shaped the German decision-making process. The dynamics of the interstate system are empirically acknowledged, yet consistently downplayed as analytically or theoretically active in co-informing German class interests and politics. The July Crisis of 1914, which saw the concentration of diplomatic activity at its highest degree of intensity, remained largely outside the remit of analysis. Ultimately, normative preconceptions about the primacy of domestic politics disabled a more dispassionate consideration of the full spectrum of forces—domestic and international, structural and agentic—that shaped the decisions that led to war.

Another important waypoint in this evolution away from the second generation of Marxists (Lenin, Bukharin, Luxemburg) was provided in the work of John A. Gallagher and Ronald E. Robinson, whose criticisms of the classical Marxist theories provide a useful corrective to the weaknesses of the former. Robinson and Gallagher’s arguments were first put forward in their seminal 1953 article “The Imperialism of Free Trade,” which challenged the “Leninist” theory of imperialism. Contrary to the idea of increased imperial activity and monopoly capital developing in lockstep throughout the 19th century, Robinson and Gallagher argued that the nature of British imperialism in the 19th century remained constant. Rather than accepting a mid-Victorian period of “indifference” toward imperialism and a late-Victorian turn to formal imperialism, Britain, they suggested, pursued a pragmatic strategy throughout the 19th century, pursuing informal imperialism, where possible, and formal imperialism, where necessary. Their monograph of seven years later (1960) had as its subtitle “The Official Mind of Imperialism,” signaling a concern with policymakers and their agency in creating

imperial dynamics. Eventually, Robinson fleshed out their arguments into a full-fledged “excentric” or “collaborative” theory of imperialism (1972), in which patterns of 19th-century imperialism are in large part seen as a function of non-Western collaboration and resistance.

At the heart of Robinson and Gallagher’s challenge to extant theories was the idea that imperialism flowed not in unilinear fashion from a European “urge to empire,” but was a complex and multilinear process in which the trigger actions of non-European resistance, and European attempts to respond to such actions, created the dynamics of imperial entanglement. Central to their method was the close study of those who made imperial policy, those who “carved up Africa.” Their book-length examination concluded that rather than economic motives, strategic considerations were at the heart of British imperial endeavors during the 19th century. Importantly, the subjective appreciation by British statesmen of their own imperial history was key to understanding their policies, as they were trapped by fears about the “loss of empire,” which led them into a cycle of misapprehension of non-European dynamics and a series of “blunders.” The development of strategic concepts was often a post hoc attempt to cover up for these blunders, which then rationalized them and solidified, prompting an ever more interventionist mindset.

Thus, instead of an escalating dynamic with capitalist development at its heart, the 19th century was recast as one of fundamental continuity, with British expansion at its center. The rhythms of imperial conquest danced to the tune of the subjective interpretations of states-persons, responding to contingent and often surprising non-European developments. In this respect, there was a dual introduction of human agency—firstly in the close attention to the actions of imperial states-people located within the formal state structures of imperial nations, and secondly via what Robinson and Gallagher called “sub-imperialisms.” These latter phenomena were a way of conceptualizing the actions of local agents of imperial states, who struggled to enroll indigenous collaborators in their ventures, often at the frontiers between imperial and peripheral areas. This second dynamic was all important, because it was within this realm that “local crises” could develop, which then destabilized imperial designs and called forth an often ad hoc response. Additionally, the distinction between the intentions of imperial statesmen and the “agents of imperialism” they sent to prosecute their plans is important, for it raises the possibility of a divergence of interests between the two, and thus partly autonomous “sub-imperial” dynamics within the overall framework of imperial ambitions.

Robinson and Gallagher’s interventions produced a range of critical responses over the years (for an overview see Louis, 2006), many of which are pertinent to the question of the relationship between Marxism and foreign policy. Although it is arguable that their own specific historical arguments about the imperial dynamics of the 19th century are sound, their contributions nonetheless posed serious theoretical challenges to Marxist-oriented accounts that cannot be ignored. At the very heart of these challenges lies the question of whether strategic and geopolitical dynamics can be reduced to emanations of deeper

economic structures, or whether the institutions of the state and the interactions of states within a state system must be granted relative, or even absolute, analytical autonomy.

Marxist State Theory

This raises the question of “the state” in Marxist theory. As is well known, Marx himself never wrote the promised “chapter on the state” during his attempt to complete *Das Kapital*, and so it was left to later generations of Marxian scholars to fill this gap. Perhaps the most obvious Marxist approach toward the state is an “instrumentalist” one. Encapsulated in the famous Marxist idea that the “executive of the modern state” is “but a committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie,” this approach claims that the state serves the interests of the capitalist class because it is itself dominated by them. The most influential articulation of “instrumentalism” came from the Anglo-American scholars in the post-WWII era, with the development of “power structure” research (Mills, 1956; Domhoff, 1967, 1990). Insofar as this research was related to Marxism, it was equally a critique of the prevailing “pluralist” or “polyarchic” approach to state theory dominant in Anglo-American political science at the time. Pluralism tended to see the American state as being characterized by fractured and widely dispersed control of key institutional resources, with a correspondingly egalitarian power structure, prompting the criticisms of Mills and Domhoff that in reality there was considerable concentration of power, and thus a “power elite.”

Given that the methodology of “power structure” research is actually shared by pluralist and power structure theorists, the question might be asked whether there is anything specifically Marxist about the approach. While the influence of the Anglo-American analytic tradition is clear here, there are some specifically Marxist themes that are incorporated into the analysis. Firstly, the question of capital ownership looms large in this scholarship, for it is assumed that it translates into political power more than any other form of institutional privilege (e.g., knowledge). Thus, the market power of major firms is assumed to give them a significant advantage in influencing political processes. Secondly, and more ambivalently, the older tradition of “monopoly capitalism” plays a (sometimes latent) role in this analysis (e.g., Baran & Sweezy, 1966). Given the strength of the power of capital, the assumption of tendencies of concentration and monopolization in the market leads to an assumption of a more coherent “capitalist elite” that can dominate state power more thoroughly. This latter point should be qualified, given that many analyses make it clear that although capitalism tends toward monopoly there can be conjunctural moments that reverse this process temporarily.

The instrumentalist approach raises important questions, which pervade all other Marxist accounts of the state. These can be usefully summed up in three questions: (1) What is “capitalist” about the ruling class? (2) By what means does this class influence or determine state policies? (3) What concrete examples are there of state policies converging with capitalist class interests? From an instrumentalist perspective, the answers to these questions are relatively straightforward, but none are without controversy. In addition, the question of relative capitalist class homogeneity needs to be assumed in order to make the instrumentalist perspective tenable, but this is also

controversial. Two related concepts attempt to deal with this problem—namely the notion of “interlocking directorates,” and class cohesion via acculturation. The former is a “positional” notion, in that it refers to institutional linkages between elites that provide a mechanism for intra-capitalist class cohesion, while the latter is a “social” or “cultural” notion, which encompasses broader non-economic linkages such as elite educational experiences.

Part of the difficulty with the instrumentalist approach comes from delineating what counts as the state, and what elements of the state can be truly said to be under control of the “ruling class.” Modern states are characterized by a high degree of bureaucratic sprawl. Outside of the formal executive and legislative branches lies a whole administrative system, consisting of civil servants, quasi-autonomous government commissions (often regulatory), central banks and other economic regulatory bodies, private bodies that have been tasked with enacting government functions, and so on. Furthermore, there is the “coercive” arm of the state, consisting of the judiciary, domestic police forces, military bodies, and intelligence services. At the outer limits of what could be included in the “state” lie the educational system, and cultural and scientific bodies connected to the formal state. From an instrumentalist viewpoint, the linkages between these diverse phenomena are tight, forming a power network that allows a single class to dominate society. As such, power structure methodology tends toward examining how far the diverse state organs are “colonized” by representatives of the ruling class.

However, even power structure research has itself been somewhat circumspect in the claims it has made regarding the extent of “colonization” of state organs by capitalists. As Ralph Miliband, often regarded as a major instrumentalist, himself noted, businessmen have not “assumed the major share of government” in most modern states (1969, p. 55), and in fact they have “never constituted, and do not constitute now, more than a relatively small minority of the state elite as a whole” (1969, p. 59). This raises important questions, especially when coupled with the observation that the tendency in advanced capitalist states has been for a bureaucratic proliferation that has allowed greater autonomy in agencies outside of the central state institutions. However, while at first blush this may seem to compromise instrumentalism as an approach, it may be said to be eminently compatible with it, because it could be said that state penetration into society via the creation of sub-systems, which interface state and society more thoroughly, actually leverages the power of central state elites to an even greater degree. Nonetheless, the vital question that remains here is the degree to which cohesion is maintained between state agencies, and the degree to which such cohesion is substantial enough to merit the notion of class coordination.

Although instrumentalist theories of the state have a certain attractiveness, due to their apparent simplicity, and their undoubted strength in explaining certain phenomena such as the bias against welfare state policies within capitalist states, another major strand of Marxist state theory has been highly critical of the approach. The intervention of Nicos Poulantzas (1969) is key here, as it was he who most forcefully criticized instrumentalism on the grounds that it could not account for the specifically *capitalist* nature of the state.

In fact, according to instrumentalism, the state is, in theory, potentially analytically distinct from capitalism, and it only comes to be a “tool” in the hands of capitalists via colonization processes. Poulantzas pointed out that this reduced the concept of social class to questions of inter-personal relations among individuals, rather than objective relations of production. This individualism gives instrumentalism a certain voluntarist flavor, which also implies that the question of socialist strategy (i.e., changing capitalist policies) is simply one of colonizing the state with those inclined toward socialist policies. As Poulantzas pointed out, the history of social democrat movements in advanced capitalist countries gave the lie to this expectation, as even long periods of rule by socialists did not result in capitalist social relations being undermined, which led him to claim that the nature of the capitalist state involved much more than merely the conscious class agency of capitalists.

The structuralist account of the state sees state institutions not as organs of state power per se, but as structural forms that realize the effects of state power. In this sense, direct participation in the state by capitalists is not the main issue, for the state is, in and of itself, a *capitalist state*. In other words, the institutions of the state are part of a (mediated and contradictory) totality, which constitutes the capitalist mode of production itself. The implication here is that the personal political beliefs of state personnel are relatively unimportant, for they are constrained to act in the interests of capital because of the logic of the capitalist totality itself. To answer the question of how exactly the state is structured by capitalism, and why state personnel are constrained by such structuring, the structuralist account notes that states are constrained in their fiscal functioning by their ultimate reliance on the economy. Additionally, the state’s legitimacy (even to some extent in an undemocratic society) is dependent on the performance of the economy. Thus, the state exists in a symbiotic relationship with the needs of private firms, whose needs are paramount to its own functioning. Put simply, the market will punish states that do not act in the collective interests of capital.

Most of the Marxist debates on the nature of the state have not explicitly addressed foreign policy formation (Holloway & Picciotto, 1978; Jessop, 1990; Clarke, 1991). Recent scholarship on the instrumentalist-structuralist divide has tended to attempt to move beyond the stalemate that the original debate, primarily conducted between Miliband and Poulantzas, is perceived to represent (Wetherly, Barrow, & Burnham, 2008). In fact, structuralism and instrumentalism may not be so far from each other when considered in the broader context of non-Marxist state theory. As Barrow usefully puts it, the core issue is whether a theory posits a greater or lesser conjuncture between state and capital (1993, pp. 146–147). In that sense, even if instrumentalism assumes a purer conjuncture between state and capital, structuralism assumes a certain level of conjuncture too. Further away from such a position, emphasizing disjuncture between state and capital, would lie those scholars who emphasize “relative autonomy” for the state (e.g., Block, 1987). For foreign policy analysis (FPA), this would translate into a simple question—to what extent can foreign policy formation be said to be linked to capitalism, either directly

—with capitalists themselves seeking to influence policy, or indirectly—in the sense that foreign policy goals have as their ultimate context the structural dependence of the state on successful capital accumulation?

New Horizons in Marxism and FPA

As the discipline of international relations (IR) developed, a confrontation with Marxist theory was inevitable. Since the end of the Cold War, Marxist IR has tended to be dominated by two important lineages, “neo-Gramscian” international political economy (IPE) and Marxist historical sociology. While there are clear overlaps and congruities between these lineages, they also have important differences. Recent work influenced by the first tradition will be discussed and the history of the second tradition and how it could inform a rethinking of the question of “international politics” within Marxism will be examined. The first lineage is more in keeping with traditional themes within foreign policy analysis (FPA), while the second lineage attempts to focus in on the question of how foreign policy and international diplomatic encounters force standard macro-historical sociologies to leave their structuralist baggage behind, and the importance of such encounters in providing turning points in international history.

Given the centrality of the state to IR, it was natural that Marxist incursions into IR would be influenced by those forms of Marxism that had tried to grapple with the question of politics. In this respect, one of the earliest and most important Marxist strands in IR was neo-Gramscian IPE. Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci’s ideas were appropriated by Robert Cox (1987) to form the basis for a new IR theory, with the concept of “hegemony” as the master analytic that would meld together the political economic and state-centric aspects of the analysis. In Gramsci’s original writings, hegemony was developed as a concept to understand how the ruling capitalist class establishes and maintains control, even to the point where the working class becomes absorbed within “bourgeois” ideology and culture, thus losing its counter-systemic potential. Cox took this idea and applied it more broadly to IR, developing the notion of “historical world orders.”

Insofar as Gramsci had seen ideas, institutions, and the material basis of society as inter-related and irreducible parts of a whole, Cox saw social forces, states, and historical world orders in similar fashion, with the “whole” being a “world hegemony.” Replacing the centrality of “mode of production” with that of “structures of accumulation,” Cox averred that each structure of accumulation had a primary “mode” of production that was hegemonic. The structure of accumulation is itself projected abroad by the state/society complex in which it is manifest, and the primary mode of production becomes emblematic of the hegemonic project. This project has two aspects—a transnationalizing one, via the agency of the hegemonic class, and an internationalizing one, via the power of the hegemonic state. The construction of global forums for the exercise of hegemony becomes vital, as they provide a means for co-opting non-hegemonic state elites into the

project itself. Eventually, a transnational ruling class crystallizes, forming a “global civil society.” Ultimately, subaltern states become “transmission belts” in which the states are internationalized and absorbed into the world hegemonic bloc.

A concept of foreign policy formation flows implicitly from this theory. The central focus of neo-Gramscian theory has tended to be on elite policy formation, and its spread via transnational and international conduits. This theory seems to work particularly well for one historical instance, namely that of the post-WWII Pax Americana. Neo-Gramscian accounts here cross-pollinate with “power structure research,” as the latter’s emphasis on elite socialization and institutions that provide capitalist class cohesion provides an underpinning to neo-Gramscian assumptions that an intentional hegemonic project is prosecuted by state actors. Thus, international forums such as the Trilateral Commission, Bilderberg Group, and a range of “think tanks” are seen as crucial mechanisms by which a distinctly liberal capitalist U.S. project for world hegemony was enacted (Sklar, 1980). The construction of a transnational “Atlantic ruling class” formed the basis for a post-WWII international order (van der Pijl, 1984), with U.S. labor organizations also playing an important international role in co-opting foreign labor elites (Rupert, 1995). Foreign policy formation flows from “the bottom up” as it were, as domestic U.S. elites enroll foreign elites into their hegemonic strategy via both consent and coercion, and foreign policy formation becomes merely the apex of the hegemonic project.

This lineage of neo-Gramscian IPE has recently informed what is arguably the most sophisticated attempt to develop a Marxist FPA thus far, by Bastian van Apeldoorn and Nana de Graaff (2016). Having previously noted the paucity of FPA within Marxism (van Apeldoorn, 2014), these scholars have produced an account of the “grand strategy” of the United States from the Civil War to contemporary times. While recognizing the revival of Marxist scholarship on the topic of imperialism in the post-9/11 period (Gowan, 2003; Wood, 2003; Harvey, 2005; Callinicos, 2009), they note that this “new imperialism” debate did not address the question of foreign policy analysis. As previously argued, remaining within the ambit of the “capitalist theory of imperialism” means privileging continuity over change, and structure over agency, and creating a disjuncture between a structural-historical register and analysis of concrete foreign policy practices.

While van Apeldoorn and de Graaf deploy the older notion that U.S. foreign policy is determined by a grand strategic orientation encapsulated in the notion of the “Open Door” policy (Williams, 1959; cf. Layne, 2006), they develop a sophisticated account of the prosecution of this grand strategy. Drawing on power structure research, they present empirical evidence of the way that grand strategy makers within the U.S. are linked to the U.S. corporate elite. While previous power structure research had made clear the broad links between corporate elites and state elites, van Apeldoorn and de Graaff seek to offer a more nuanced account that traces out how particular state managers are linked to the corporate elite via think tanks and policy planning bodies (2016, p. 16). In doing so they hope to explain not only continuity, via the Open Door orientation as a domestic source of

U.S. grand strategy, but also change, especially in the period from the end of Cold War to present times.

Turning to the second lineage, from the 1990s onward, a renewed programmatic call was launched from within the field of IR for an “encounter” between IR and Marxism (Halliday, 1994; Teschke, 2011) at the level of general IR theory. It provoked a re-foundation of Marxist IR theory, reformulated in the theoretical register of international historical sociology, through a re-examination of the relation between capitalism, the state, and the states-system in historical perspective. Justin Rosenberg (1994) argued in his early work for a structural correspondence between different geopolitical systems—the classical Greek polis system, the Italian renaissance city-states system, early modern empires, and the modern system of sovereign states—and different modes of production/social structures. Although most geopolitical systems are characterized by anarchy, a “structural discontinuity” separates all pre-capitalist systems from the modern capitalist international order, premised on the distinction between personalized domination under pre-capitalist relations of production and impersonal modern sovereignty, anchored in the separation between the economic and the political in capitalism (Wood, 1995). This structural discontinuity explained the co-constitution and compatibility of a system of bordered (but porous) sovereign states and a transnational international economy—the “empire of civil society.” In this perspective, the capitalist anarchy of the market, regulated by a de-subjectified price-mechanism, was not simply held to be analogous to international anarchy, regulated by a de-subjectified balance of power, but its condition of possibility. Modern power politics and its realist discourse are thus premised on an abstract notion of the state, grounded in a generalized differentiation between the economic and the political under capitalism.

Rosenberg’s study was marked by a tension between a structuralist understanding of Marxism and its attention to historical development (Lacher, 2002; Teschke, 2003, pp. 39–41). European history was reconstructed as a series of successive, discrete, and self-contained geopolitical orders, marked by a sequence of system-wide “structural discontinuities.” This procedure synchronized the spatiotemporally plural, differential, and interacting trajectories of regional socioeconomic and political developments into the abstract and a-spatial category of the mode of production. The crises—social conflicts, revolutions, and wars—inherent in these transformations disappeared from view. Agency and especially class conflict were underrepresented. Relatedly, the suggested structural interrelation and functional compatibility between a territorially divided states-system and a private, transnational world market obscured the complex historical dynamics of the co-development of capitalism, the modern state, and the modern states-system. The latter two are analytically derived from the first, while all three are regarded as causally and temporally coeval aspects of capitalist modernity. This thesis overplayed the explanatory power of capitalism, leaving the long-term historical co-development (but not co-genesis) of capitalism, state, and states-system underexplored. The idea that all European polities marched simultaneously—in unison and in lockstep—through the passages from one mode of production to the next suggested a broad-brush periodization

that de-internationalized and synchronized the regionally varying developmental tempi into an orthodox Marxist stagism that was not reconcilable with the historical record. While this account insisted on the compatibility between a transnational capitalist “empire of civil society and an inter-state order,” it failed to explain why capitalism existed within an international state-system in the first place.

These criticisms were central to Benno Teschke’s and Hannes Lacher’s reconstruction of the long-term development of the changing political geographies and geopolitical dynamics of “Europe” from the end of the Carolingian Empire to the emergence and expansion of a capitalist polity in early-18th-century Britain, tied into a cumulative account of regionally differential class and state formation (Teschke, 2003; Lacher, 2006). Theoretically, the account was premised on transformations in politically constituted and class-contested social property relations, which generate variable geopolitical strategies of reproduction that define different modes of territoriality and geopolitical relations. Developing the tradition of “political Marxism” (Brenner, 1985), the project examined the sui generis character of feudal geopolitics (Teschke, 1998), reconstructed the emergence of a medieval geopolitical pluriverse, and retraced the diverging, yet interconnected, trajectories of class and state-formation in late medieval and early modern France and England. Because French and continental “absolutisms” remained mired in pre-capitalist social property and authority relations, dynastic sovereignty and the persistence of “geopolitical accumulation” among European powers imparted specific premodern practices of international relations (inter-dynastic marriages, personal unions, wars of succession, mercantilist trade wars, predatory equilibrium, and empire formation) on the “Westphalian system.” Although these practices constituted a system of multiple territories, it remained composed predominantly by the social relations of dynastic-absolutist sovereignty, leading to a revision of the Westphalian settlement as the foundational moment of the modern states-system in the field of IR. In contrast, the rise of agrarian capitalism and a new form of capitalist-parliamentarian sovereignty in post-revolutionary Britain led to the emergence of a uniquely dynamic great power. Regulating continental inter-dynastic relations through the active management of power-balancing, Britain exerted economic and geopolitical pressures that forced over time continental polities to design diverse counter-strategies of class and state-formation through “revolutions from above” in a process of spatiotemporally differentiated and geopolitically combined development (Teschke, 2005). Because the states-system was not “the obverse side” of capitalism, but the cumulative consequence of century-long pre-capitalist medieval and early modern class conflicts over rights of domination and exploitation over land and people, which finally crystallized in a plurality of militarily competing dynastic territories, the inter-relation between capitalism and the states-system is not theorized in terms of an invariant capitalist structural-functionalism, but in a processual perspective that is attentive to the protracted expansion, transformation, and, sometimes, negation of capitalism within a territorially prefigured geopolitical pluriverse—an interstate order—that itself underwent manifold alterations in the process. Capitalist expansion was not a transnational and even process, generating a world “after its own image,” but refracted through a series of geopolitically contested encounters between polities with diverse

results in different regions of the world. The persistent centrality of the state militates against any functional long-term trend-line in the correlation between forms of governance and global capital accumulation, calling for close attentiveness to the historically changing dialectic of state projects of de- and re-territorialization (cooperation and competition), rather than a single identifiable logic, that characterizes the course of capitalist modernity. This opened up a non-deterministic perspective on the historically changing geopolitical strategies of reproduction by and between capitalist and non-capitalist polities.

These initial forays drew, however, critiques that pointed to the absence of accounts of foreign policy formation, diplomacy, and the active political encounters between multiple states, conceptualized in the standard notion of “international politics.” “Not surprisingly, diplomacy is not even a significant modality in international relations as conceptualized by World System Theory and New Marxism, because politics cannot be anything but an epiphenomenon to relations of production” (Joensson & Hall, 2005, p. 18; cf. Schroeder, 1996, pp. vii–ix). The challenge emerged how to move from international historical sociology to a historical sociology of international politics. This problem drew two different responses from within Marxist IR, one that deepened and widened the structuralist register of Marxism across the entire terrain of world history, and another one, moving toward a more radical historicist mode, that sought to incorporate foreign policy formation, diplomacy, and international politics into its remit.

Within the structuralist mode of Marxist international historical sociology, “the international” was acknowledged and posited as a generic feature of world history and thus central problem for Marxism. This led to a paradigm shift away from Marx’s spaceless category “mode of production” to Leon Trotsky’s notion of “uneven and combined development” (UCD), developed as a “general abstraction” and “universal law” of world history (Rosenberg, 2006; Anievas, 2014; Anievas & Nisancioglu, 2015; Matin, 2015). Trotsky drew attention to the generic unevenness of coexisting and interacting multiple patterns of historical development in different regions. Even in their encounter with the spread of capitalism, these differentiated regional trajectories would reinforce themselves, rather than even out, through “combined development”—an amalgamation of the old and the new. UCD suggests that advanced states lash the “whip of external necessity” on “backward” states, which enjoy a “privilege of backwardness.” This allows them to adopt the most cutting-edge technologies, institutions, and material practices pioneered by leading states. Backward states engage in processes of combined development, which generate “catch-up” and the “skipping of stages.”

While a formula (UCD) was found to overcome the strictures of classical sociology (methodological nationalism), comparative history (comparison between discrete societies), and systemic IR theory (a-sociological interstate anarchy), several theoretical and empirical objections recurred. Theoretically, the familiar conundrum emerged how a nomothetic and structuralist conception of theory—a universal law that posits determinate retrodictions and predictions—framed in the register of cause and effect and charged with notions of “autopoiesis,” accommodates human agency (Teschke, 2014;

Rioux, 2014). For if the law holds, agents need to be conceived as passive bearers of a preordained script—as personifications of categories. If the law is indeterminate due to a more active conception of agency, its status as a law needs to be relaxed or canceled. A third possibility implies a careful re-definition of the meaning of the notion of law in the social sciences, but this has yet to be accomplished in the UCD literature. Empirically, the approach fails to register that Trotsky's initial idea was spatiotemporally tied to a specific case: the Russian Revolution. Attempts to generalize from this instance across the record of world history invited disconfirmations at the first empirical hurdle: the effect of more advanced states on more backward regions could produce “catch-up” but also generated multiple instances of de-development, non-development, under-development, and arrested development upon contact between early and late developers. Human agency, both social and geopolitical, renders the law indeterministic. The category of “international interactivity” in the UCD lexicon captures primarily sociological “vectors” that register the developmental gradient between more and less advanced polities—colliding entities that “suffuse” their innovations abroad. Ultimately, an analytical distinction is required that discriminates between generic border-transgressing processes of sociological diffusion (ideas, technologies, institutions, migrations, trade, diseases, etc.) and a conception of international politics. Such conception needs to register that power is articulated at the highest level of aggregation in the state, and projected abroad through statecraft, foreign policy, war, and diplomacy—geopolitics in the standard sense.

If these debates focus on the problem of structuralism, they also depart from the methodological core assumption of FPA, namely that FPA needs to be anchored in single-case studies that privilege “inside-out” dynamics. This suggests that foreign policy formation is often influenced by international environments, as foreign policy outcomes, even for the strongest international actors, routinely diverge from domestic intentions due to the supervening influence of international relations. Inversely, macro-sociological attempts—whether neo-Marxist (Wallerstein, 1974; Rosenberg, 2006) or neo-Weberian (Skocpol, 1979; Tilly, 1992; Buzan & Lawson, 2015)—to theorize international relations through the recovery of the differential domestic composition of social and authority relations of polities that constitute international orders ultimately tend to relapse, like neorealism, into functional explanations of international politics that suppress the efficacy of foreign policy-making and international politics. If we define diplomacy as the coercive and non-coercive pursuit of foreign policy interests, grand strategy (as part of foreign policy) as the articulation of essential long-term security interests and objectives that are pursued through the coordination of multiple policy areas, and international politics as the open-ended encounter of multiple foreign policies, then we have identified a vast terrain of agentic creativity, which typically escapes general IR theories, whether Marxist or non-Marxist. Structural theories of IR or international historical sociology externalize foreign policy from the remit of explanation or reduce it to a function of either “modes of production,” “unevenness,” “power capacities,” “discourses,” “configurations,” or “identity.”

How should international historical sociology be readjusted to escape the nomological and functionalist-structuralist trap for purposes of framing distinct objects of study-specific events? Conceiving of such a historical sociology of international politics raises a number of theoretical problems—structure vs. agency, domestic vs. international determinations, intentions and non-intended outcomes—that also need to be adjusted in relation to the specific event under investigation: grand strategy formation, war-declarations, alliance-formation, peace treaties, etc. For what these high-policy events have in common is that they act as possible turning points that alter and disrupt putatively predictable and structurally determined logics—the unfolding of capitalism or power politics. Yet, accepting that diplomatic history needs to be a component in accounting for the high politics of foreign policy formation, diplomacy, and international politics does not imply a return to Rankean ideas of the autonomy of international history qua diplomatic history, but an acknowledgement of the agential power exercised by foreign policy elites that operate within specific contexts that need to be interpreted by these actors. Avoiding the collapsing of “text” into “context” requires accepting a potential difference between contextual pressures, domestic and international, and non-derivable outcomes. Rather than deducing strategies, decisions, and outcomes from a series of antecedent structural causes, this shifts the explanatory burden away from external and internal imperatives to the creative responses developed by situated agents to such contextual pressures, as they innovate while navigating specific contexts. This includes the inter-subjectively (both domestically and internationally) contested and negotiated resolution of these multiple agentic strategies, and their intended and unintended consequences. This brings international politics “back in.” Deploying a historicist framework of analysis that centers contextualized agency requires a trade-off between generalizing theories that operate at levels of abstraction that abandon the concreteness of international politics while subsuming history under preconceived laws and concepts, and retrieving and activating the situated consciousness, actions, and decisions of contextualized agents. Failing that, decisions are not taken, but reduced to outcomes of antecedent pressures. The challenge is to demonstrate the efficacy of foreign policy, diplomacy, and international politics—the difference they make in converting a determinate domestic and international situation into a specific and non-derivable set of outcomes. Ultimately, it is the efficacy of specific agents that explains specific outcomes. While these outcomes are retrospectively intelligible, other courses of action remain a distinct possibility. The emphasis on contextualized and relational agency thus rejects deterministic modes of reasoning. The explanatory valued-added consists in the ability to account for historical specificity.

For the case of major international peace settlements and high summit (including pre-summit) diplomacy—here the example is the Utrecht Peace Treaty of 1713—the requirement of agentic contextualization suggests a basic framework of analysis (Teschke, *FORTHCOMING*). First, to assemble the relevant war and peace parties, and to account for their basic social and authority relations, their economic performance, modes of public revenue procurement, and institutions of sovereignty in order to arrive at a social and institutional account of state power. Second, to explain the historical formation

of different institutional contexts for foreign policy-making among these actors, and to show how the open-ended question to what purpose power is being directed and deployed is being resolved, that is, to account for foreign policy formation, given that states are never unitary and rational actors endowed with pre-fixed and ready-made national interests. Finally, showing how wartime and postbellum foreign policy become internationally executed, modified, and enacted through military and diplomatic interaction between multiple polities in the sphere of international politics. This move from structural macro-determinations to the micro-politics of international statecraft remains central to account for the specific outcomes of the Utrecht settlement.

The Utrecht provisions enacted a specific pro-British project of world-ordering, the blue-water policy, that cannot be captured with generic IR concepts, including automatic power-balancing, uni-polarity, hegemony, international society, anarchy, imperialism, or collective security. Moving from context to text, diverging 17th-century Anglo-French social relations of sovereignty—the rise of English capitalism vs. the persistence of French pre-capitalism—and their dissimilar fiscal, financial, and constitutional institutional arrangements explain significant power-differentials between both polities. These also produced diverging Anglo-French institutionalizations of turn-of-the-century foreign policy-making: the parliamentarization of British post-1688 foreign policy-making versus the persistence of royal-executive foreign policy-making in absolutist France. The combination of qualitatively new British power resources and the altered institutional context for British foreign policy-making enabled the domestically contested and deliberate making of a new grand strategy that was developed and militarily tested during the War of the Spanish Succession. The new institutional basis of policymaking meant that party politics and social interests, unlike in continental old regimes, came to influence public policy, including grand strategy formation. This led to a process in which the conflicting foreign policy orientations between the Whigs—military continental commitment—and the Tories—oceanic navalism—merged during the prosecution of the War of the Spanish Succession into a “new way of war,” a specific peacetime strategy and a distinct pro-British way of international ordering: blue-water policy. It cleaved into two geographically distinct but joined-up aspects: defensive and concerned with security interests versus the Continent, executed through power-balancing, and offensive and concerned with commercial interests overseas, executed through an aggressive navalism. Two contextual events—the victory of the Tories in the 1710 general election and the enthronement of the new Austrian emperor Charles VI in 1711—changed the direction of anti-French British grand strategy, embarking on a course of pre-Utrecht secret diplomacy with France. The splitting of the opposition, friends and foes alike, informed the articulation of a distinct peace plan—the Bolingbroke Plan—which was imposed at Utrecht as a *Diktat* on Britain’s erstwhile wartime allies—the Dutch and the Austrian Habsburgs. The treaty provisions secured the “rationalization,” that is, the de-ideologization, the de-dynastification, the de-confessionalization and de-territorialization of British ambitions on the Continent, the recalibration of continental political geography through mini-state proliferation more conducive to British power-balancing, the invention and active manipulation of the balance of power, and the pursuit of oceanic commercial

primacy, premised on the new principle of the British “national interest.” Utrecht established a new and uniquely pro-British phase of world-ordering. Subsuming these outcomes under general logics de-subjectifies international politics—the difference it makes in turning a set of circumstances into non-derivable outcomes.

Conclusion

The belated encounter between Marxism and foreign policy analysis (FPA) has been marked by a series of different starting points and theoretical preferences between both intellectual projects. Whereas FPA originated within a United States-centric Cold War context, growing out of the subfield of “comparative foreign policy,” which initially pursued a positivistic methodology, Marxism’s European theoretical legacy afforded neither international relations nor foreign policy analysis any systematic place since its inception in the 19th century. Recurring rapprochements were qualified successes due to Marxism’s tendency to relapse into structuralist versions of grand theorizing. While these could speak to general theories of international relations in the field of IR from the late 20th century onward, FPA fell again and again through the cracks of this grand analytical register. Marxist FPA has only very recently been recognized as a serious research program and ongoing project, but with the two traditions of neo-Gramscian IPE and Marxist historical sociology, Marxism has started to identify a problematique and produced a nascent literature, which should bear fruit in the future.

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Notes:

(1.) Rosa Luxemburg’s (1951) important writings on capitalism and imperialism are contemporaneous with the classical Marxist theory of imperialism but differ from it. She criticized Marx’s analysis of expanded reproduction and averred that capitalists require an “outside” (i.e., non-capitalist environment) to sell goods to, or else a realization crisis occurs. Thus she saw capitalism as coexisting with, and inherently connected to, the non-capitalist world. Given this requirement for capitalism to have access to a non-capitalist “outside,” a rudimentary theory of foreign policy follows, in which the capitalist world first confronts the non-capitalist world in a violent symbiotic relationship, while at the same time it “eats it up” as the capital relation expands and the non-capitalist world becomes capitalist. Eventually, the capitalist system will break down as a result of this contradiction—it needs an “outside,” but it continually destroys such an “outside” as it expands. For discussion and critique, see Brewer, 1990, pp. 58–72.

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